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AUTHOR Kennedy, Rob
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ABSTRACT

Historically, the study of measurement and evaluation has not been highly valued by elementary education majors. In fact, research suggests that only a minority of teachers show evidence of adequate preparation in these areas. To motivate students to have more interest in the subject, this study examined the contents of a tests and measurements course and its relevance to the needs of elementary school teachers. A survey instrument was developed and each of 42 students in the Spring 1992 class was required to contact 3 elementary school teachers to provide responses. These practitioners were asked to determine which information, from a provided list, was pertinent to the course's content. For content validity, information was taken from the course text Tuckman's "Testing for Teachers" second edition (1988). Students were promised that any content claimed to be unnecessary would be dropped from the class curriculum. The main body of this document provides the results of 123 responses to the survey instrument distributed by grade levels. Most of the teachers surveyed were from grades 1-5. Results indicate that the vast majority of subject matter included in the Tuckman text appears to be needed by practitioners; no additional content was suggested, and appropriate use of existing material was recommended. A copy of the Diagnostic and Evaluative Procedures in Education Survey is appended. (LL)

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Elementary Evaluation Content Needs from the Practitioners' Perspectives

Rob Kennedy
Department of Educational Leadership
University of Arkansas, Little Rock

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Elementary Evaluation Content Needs from the Practitioners' Perspectives

Rob Kennedy

Teachers of elementary education preservice courses, as with teachers of other preservice subjects, are necessarily mindful of the content of the classes in preparing to teach each term. Material that is relevant to students is much more likely to be learned and appreciated by them. The purpose of this study, then, was to survey elementary education teachers to determine which information, from a provided list, was pertinent based on their experiences.

According to Newman and Stallings (1982), it seems that traditionally the study of measurement and evaluation has not been very highly valued. In fact, their research suggested that only a minority of teachers showed evidence of adequate preparation in these areas. Although their research is somewhat dated, recent evidence observed by this author in teaching and consulting would tend to support that the research is still viable.

To motivate students to have more of an interest in the subject, then, the survey was developed. For content validity, the information was taken from the text for the course, Tuckman's Testing for Teachers, second edition (1988). The survey, which is shown in the appendix, consisted of twenty open-ended questions covering this content. The Spring, 1993, class was comprised of 42 elementary education majors. Each student was required to contact three teachers who the student trusted to provide the responses. The idea was to increase the credibility of these answers for the students. The students were promised that any content that the teachers claimed was unnecessary would be dropped from the class curriculum.

The students were given three weeks to have the forms completed, and were allowed to conduct the survey by telephone or in person. It was not practical to have the respondents randomly surveyed since one of the purposes was to allow the students to appreciate the perceived importance of the content through teachers they believed, and who were not being paid to say, "Eat this. It's good for you".

Since the surveys were required for ten percent of the students' grades, the response rate was excellent, with all students providing the expected number of completed forms. Although the element of coercion is obvious, it seems unlikely that students would want to fake the responses, especially since there is a certain amount of innate curiosity as to whether the teachers actually would recommend studying the content. The consistency of the responses among kindergarten through sixth grade levels and across geographic areas which went beyond the borders of this mid-Southern state, suggest further that the responses are believeable. In addition, a large pilot study done the previous semester (Fall, 1992) yielded similar results.

Results

The responses were distributed by grade levels as follows:

Pre-kindergarten	5
Kindergarten	13
1st grade	30
2nd grade	20
3rd grade	17
4th grade	26
5th grade	20
6th grade	17
7th-12th grades	12

There were 123 teachers surveyed, but several work with more than one grade. Most of the teachers were from the 1st through 5th grades.

1. Do you write behavioral objectives as part of your planning for tests?

   Yes 83 No 40

2. Do you use Bloom's Taxonomy as part of your planning for tests?

   Yes 95 No 28

3. Do you write content outlines as part of your planning for tests?

   Yes 69 No 53 No response 1

4. Do you write test-item specifications as part of your planning for tests?

   Yes 59 No 60 No response 4

5. Which short-answer test-item types do you use in testing?:

   a. unstructured (can be answered by a word, phrase, or number)

      Yes 98 No 25

   b. completion (fill in an omitted word or phrase)

      Yes 98 No 25

   c. true-false (yes-no)

      Yes 66 No 57

d. two-choice classification

Yes 41 No 82

e. multiple choice

Yes 93 No 30

f. matching

Yes 95 No 28

6. Do you use essay-type test items in testing?

Yes 72 No 51

7. Do you use performance-type tests?

Yes 98 No 25

If so, what kinds (eg., writing, dramatic presentations, science projects, portfolios)?

Writing	58
Science projects	27
Drama	21
Portfolios	20
Speaking/reports	18
Projects (general)	16
Posters	04
Teacher observations	04
Journals	03
Social studies projects	03
Other	17

8. What means, if any, do you use to insure that your tests have content validity?

Match content to class objectives	35
Stick with the text/lectures/publisher tests	24
Match content to course content guides	08
Test and retest	04
Other	07

[Not all teachers responded.]

9. What means, if any, do you use to build reliability into your tests?

Use standardized/book publisher tests	07
Test only what taught	06

Other	17

[Not all teachers responded.]

10. Do you use standardized tests?

Yes	99	No	24

11. What types of test items (eg., unstructured, completion, true-false, two-choice, multiple choice, matching, essay) do you most frequently use on your teacher-made tests?

Unstructured (open)	43
Completion (fill-in)	56
True-false	20
Two-choice	09
Multiple choice	53
Matching	50
Essay	30

12. a. How are norm-referenced tests, like the Stanford, useful?

Diagnostics/placement	50
Not useful	20
Never used	14
For comparisons	10
Rate the curriculum	03
Other	02

b. What are their drawbacks?

Invalid measure	31
Too much emphasis on one test	15
Too stressful	11
Test taking ability varies	09
Culturally biased	09
Child may be having a bad day	07
Too hard	06
Leads to comparison of students	05
Too long	03
Ignores other student characteristics	03
Too broad	02
Covers more material than have completed	02
Other	08

13. a. How are criterion-referenced tests, like the MPT, useful?

Diagnostics	48
Do not use/not useful	12

Motivation for class to learn	06
Basis for comparison	04
Objectives are more easily taught	03
Other	06

b. What are their drawbacks?

Too stressful 2
Not accurate 1

14. What types of standard scores do you use or have need to be able to interpret?

a. z-scores

Yes 19 No 104

b. T-scores

Yes 19 No 104

c. CEEB scores

Yes 05 No 118

d. AGCT scores

Yes 06 No 117

15. Do you need to be able to interpret stanine scores?

Yes 70 No 53

16. Do you need to be able to interpret percentile ranks?

Yes 106 No 17

17. Do you need to be able to interpret grade-equivalent scores?

Yes 100 No 23

18. Do you use or need to be able to interpret standard deviations?

Yes 68 No 55

19. Do you need to be able to interpret Wechsler Scales?

Yes 36 No 87

20. Do you have any recommendations concerning the teaching of the course in Diagnostic and Evaluative Procedures in terms of any content or other aspects?

How to interpret test scores	12
More on portfolios	06
More on performance tests	05
Encourage testing to objectives/what was taught	04
How to make up tests	04
Be practical. Teach what teachers use.	04
Don't base grades simply on test scores	03
More on observing for evaluation	03
Individualize	02
Make the course into a small workshop	02
Other	04

Conclusions

Although not as comprehensive as Shafer's study (1989), the comments and suggestions offered by these teachers are instructive (no pun intended). The vast majority of the subject matter included in the Tuckman (1988) text appears to be needed by practitioners. The text is fairly limited in content compared to the areas Shafer investigated, but nevertheless offers a fair range of content to study during the course of one 15-week semester. Judging by the final recommendations made by the teachers, there was no additional content suggested, only appropriate use of the existing material. Probably one thought, expressed by one teacher, sums the recommendations most succinctly, and bears contemplation:

> "Remember, behind each grade is a child."

References

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Tuckman, B. W. (1988). Testing for Teachers. (2nd ed.). San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.

Student_____

EDFN 4205 Teacher Survey
Diagnostic and Evaluative Procedures in Education

I have been asked by one of my instructors to survey practicing public elementary school teachers for their opinions, from the practitioner's standpoint, about the content which should be taught in the Diagnostic and Evaluative Procedures in Education course. Would you be willing to participate in this survey, if you have not already? Your name will not be used [and should not be written on this form]. (If the response is no, you will need to find another teacher. If the response is yes, please write down the district employing the teacher and the grade level(s) taught.)

District: Grade Level(s):

Would you please respond to the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience. We are trying to gather information to make the assessment class as realistic and meaningful as possible. If you have any additional comments you wish to make, feel free to add them at any time. List any comments to the right or on the back, indicating to which item the comments belong. Be sure that you can explain what each of these items is (See Tuckman if you are unsure.).

1. Do you write behavioral objectives as part of your planning for tests?

2. Do you use Bloom's Taxonomy as part of your planning for tests?

3. Do you write content outlines as part of your planning for tests?

4. Do you write test-item specifications as part of your planning for tests?

5. Which short-answer test-item types do you use in testing?:

   a. unstructured (can be answered by a word, phrase, or number)

   b. completion (fill in an omitted word or phrase)

   c. true-false (yes-no)

   d. two-choice classification

   e. multiple choice

   f. matching

6. Do you use essay-type test items in testing?

7. Do you use performance-type tests?

   If so, what kinds (eg., writing, dramatic presentations, science projects, portfolios)?

8. What means, if any, do you use to insure that your tests have content validity?

9. What means, if any, do you use to build reliability into your tests?

10. Do you use standardized tests?

11. What types of test items (eg., unstructured, completion, true-false, two-choice, multiple choice, matching, essay) do you most frequently use on your teacher-made tests?

12. a. How are norm-referenced tests, like the Stanford, useful?

    b. What are their drawbacks?

13. a. How are criterion-referenced tests, like the MPT, useful?

    b. What are their drawbacks?

14. What types of standard scores do you use or have need to be able to interpret?

    a. z-scores

    b. T-scores

    c. CEEB scores

    d. AGCT scores

15. Do you need to be able to interpret stanine scores?

16. Do you need to be able to interpret percentile ranks?

17. Do you need to be able to interpret grade-equivalent scores?

18. Do you use or need to be able to interpret standard deviations?

19. Do you need to be able to interpret Wechsler Scales?

20. Do you have any recommendations concerning the teaching of the course in Diagnostic and Evaluative Procedures in terms of any content or other aspects?

Thank you very much for your help. Your comments will contribute to the quality of the course. We appreciate your time and thoughts. (Be sure to be enthusiastic in expressing your appreciation. They did you a favor.)